

History of Nagbanshis in Jharkhand

R K Archana Sada Suman Tudu¹ and Dr. Rabindranath Sarma^{*2}

ABSTRACT

Jharkhand is a state situated in the northeast of India. It came into existence on 15th November 2000 after separation from Bihar. It is bounded by Bihar in the north, Odisha in the South, West Bengal in the east and Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh in the south. In ancient times it used to be an entirely forested area. The hills of Kaimur and Vindhya surrounded this region, which was covered in lush woods and hills. Primitive tribes came to dwell here because of the region's abundance of forests and mountains. The ancient tribes that lived here were Asur, Khadiya, and Birhor. Subsequently, the Korba tribe arrived in the Jharkhand region, followed by the Munda, Oraon, Ho, and other tribes. Following these, the tribes such as Chero, Kharwar, Bhumij, and Shanthal made their way to Jharkhand. Nagbanshi was the first ruling dynasty that continued to rule till the modern period. The researcher has attempted to go extensively into the history of the Nagbanshi and their interactions with the different tribes residing in Jharkhand.

KEY WORDS

Jharkhand, Nagbanshi, History, Oral narrative

INTRODUCTION

Jharkhand has been known by many names since ancient times, the main ones being Keekat Pradesh, Vratya Pradesh, Paundra or Paundrik, Archkhand or Kark Khand, Nagpur, Jharkhand Kokar or Khukhra, Chutia Nagpur, Chotanagpur etc. The region that is now known as Magadha was known as 'Keekat' during the Rigveda time and was substantially larger than it is today. By the time of Atharvaveda, references to Magadha Anga and other figures became evident. They went by the name Vratya Pradesh as well. The Aitareya Brahmana describes Pundras alongside Andhras, Shabars, and Pulindas, and Cheras among Bangas and Magadhas. According to Keith and McDonnell, the Pundras once inhabited what is now Bihar, Bengal (Keshari, 2014). The Aryans referred to the Chota Nagpur Division as Jharkhand or the "Forest tract." Although the term "Kokrah" became a widespread term for this region, the word "Jharkhand" seems to have endured throughout Muslim administration. Kokrah was the domain of the Raja of Kokrah and was a part of Suba Bihar in the Ain-i-Akbari. The Mughals also referred to it as Coira Orissa or Nagpur. The name Nagpur most likely originated in the fifteenth or sixteenth century A.D. Under the terms of the Diwani grant, it was given to the East India Company in 1765. The Nagpur Pargana was settled in the covenants offered to the Nagbanshi Raja (Kumar, 1970). The history of the Nagbanshi kings in Jharkhand has been investigated by a researcher using both primary and secondary sources. Oral narratives served as the primary source of data, while various books, papers, periodicals, websites, government publications, and gazetteers have been used to gather secondary data.

ORIGIN AND TERRITORIES OF THE NAGBANSHI KINGS

The Chutia settlement is said to have been founded by the Patriarch Chuta Hadam, or an elderly man, who was most likely fourth in lineage from the legendary king Phani Mukut Rai. A large fair was held in Chutia in 1851 and continued until 1877 in observance of this tradition. For a while, the ancient word "Chutia" was used to derive the name "Chota," which was supported by G. C. Depree, the officer in command of the Topographical Survey, and Col. Dalton, a geographer. The Ranchi District Gazetteer's editor, M. G. Hallett, agreed with this viewpoint as well, but he gave no explanation. It should be noted that Rennel misspelt the village's name, Chutiah, and mentioned Chuta Nagpur as the name of the country on his map. Therefore, it's possible that the Chutia village is not the source of the district's name (Kumar, 1970).

The Nag caste has been an ancient and dominant caste of India. Venkateswara is of the opinion that the snake civilization was spread not only in the semi-circle of India but also outside India. Snake symbols have also been found in Mohenjodaro. Arjuna had married a snake girl and Ramchandra's son Kush was also married to a snake girl named Kumudwati. Place names like Nagarkoli, Nagpattan, Nagpur, and so on still evoke visions of the Nag caste (Keshari, 2014).

Corresponding Author: Dr. Rabindranath Sarma

1. Research Scholar, Department of Tribal Studies, Central University of Jharkhand

E-mail: rkarchana854@gmail.com, Contact No: 9798730643

2. Associate Professor, Department of Tribal Studies, Central University of Jharkhand

Email: rabindranath.sarma@cuja.ac.in, Contact No: 7549198583

ORAL NARRATIVES

The primary concern is not whether these stories can offer an "authentic" picture of the past, but rather how a culture builds its identity and continues to exist over time based on its relationship to the land these stories are not static, formulaic images; rather, they may change in response to the whims of the political situation of the time. Adivasis were therefore able to rewrite themselves into their pasts through these "histories," strengthening the connection between their pasts and present (Gupta, 2019). The story of the Nagbanshi Rulers' beginning is connected to the village of Sutyambe in the Kanke block. The history of Phani Mukut Rai, the first Nagbanshi ruler, is shrouded in numerous stories. The first emperor Phani Mukut Rai's birth is the subject of several stories, all of which are highly well liked by the locals in the Ranchi district. Following are the popular narratives:

According to one of the myths surrounding Phani Mukut Rai's birth, no one knows the identity of his mother. One Nag (kind of Snake) was using his "Hood" to guard a newborn child on the edge of Sutyambe's Andheriya-Injoria Pond. When Madra Munda, the monarch of that region at the time, learned about it, he brought the boy along and raised it as his own son. Later, that youngster grew up to become Phani Mukut Rai, who founded the Nagbanshi dynasty.

According to another tradition, he is also said to be the son of Sheshnag and a Banaras girl. When he was born, Sheshnag left for his own realm, leaving the girl and their kid beside the Andheriya-Injoria pond alone. The king Madra Munda then took the boy with him and raised him as his own. Later, when he was old and it was time to pass the throne on to the next generation, he did not give it to his own son directly. Instead, he held a fierce competition between the two princes, and in the end, Sheshnag's son emerged as the winner and took over as the first Nagbanshi king.

There is one more tradition claiming that the first Nagbanshi emperor was an Oraon child, according to the people of the Oraon tribe. One royal family of the Oraon tribe was sheltering close to the village of Sutyambe during the attack on RohtasGarh, and the princess of that family was pregnant. She gave birth to a son, although it was exceedingly difficult to bring the newborn infant with them. The decision was made to keep him close to the water. The young infant was discovered beneath the snake by the village's monarch, Madra Munda, in the morning. He took care of the infant in his palace alongside his own son. Even though he loved both equally, Phani Mukut Rai became the first monarch of Nagbanshi under the name Phani Mukut Rai because he was more valuable to him. This song provides a description of the incident.

*"Sutyambe re Joda Pokhar: Nagvanshi Raja chhatar Dhare
Budhwa re Oraon Chhora: Nagpurak Raja, Nagvanshi Raja chhatardhaare
Sirjala Sutyamba, Pargana Khukhra,
Doinsanagaaremein, Nagvanshi Raja Chatar Dhare
Munda ka posalchhawa,
Nagpurak Raja, Nagvanshi Raja chhatardhare" (Bhagat, 2017).*

Here the writer is explaining about the birth of the first Nagbanshi ruler. Sutyambe re jodapokhar means the pond near sutyambe; Nagbanshi Raja Chhatar Dhare means the king was in the protection of hood. Further, the writer says that the Munda king also had a child of same age and he taken care of that little born child in his own guardianship and one day he became the king of Nagpur region.



Picture of Andheriya-Injoria Talab situated at
Sutiambe of Kanke Block, Ranchi

DISCUSSION

The Adivasi myth is an arena where they document their history rather than just a fictional story. Basic information originated from Adivasi informants, even though colonial officials and missionaries replicated the creation narratives (Sen, 2018). The establishment date and tenure of the Nagbanshi kings also seems unusual, like the reign of Phani Mukut Rai is said to be 94 years old, but it is certain that the Nagbanshi state was established in the tenth century, as stated by J. Reed in the Chhotanagpur Survey Report. Phani Mukut Rai was married in the Govanshikshetriyas of

Panchet, and he had also defeated the invading Keonjharstate with the help of Panchet. The Raksel rulers of Surguja ruled over locations such as Korbe, Barve, and so forth. He, too, had to concede to Rai's supremacy. By uniting the entire Nagpuri territory under a single sutra, Phani Mukut Rai, the first Nagvanshi ruler, created a unified state. He was related to the tribal people (Keshari, 2014).

Reign of Nagbanshi kings: According to Dripnath Shahdev's description

| | Name of the King | Coronation Year | Ruling Years | Last Year of Rule |
|----|------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Phani Mukut Rai | 083 A. D | 94 | 177 A. D |
| 2 | Mukut Rai | 177 A. D | 55 | 232 A. D |
| 3 | Ghant Rai | 232 A. D | 41 | 273 A. D |
| 4 | Madan Rai | 273 A. D | 53 | 326 A. D |
| 5 | Pratap Rai | 326 A. D | 27 | 353 A. D |
| 6 | Kandarp Rai | 353 A. D | 38 | 391 A. D |
| 7 | Uday Mani Rai | 391 A. D | 25 | 416 A. D |
| 8 | Jai Mani Rai | 416 A. D | 39 | 445 A. D |
| 9 | Shree Mani Rai | 445 A. D | 35 | 480 A. D |
| 10 | Phani Rai | 480 A. D | 46 | 526 A. D |
| 11 | Udai Rai | 526 A. D | 22 | 548 A. D |
| 12 | Gendu Rai | 548 A. D | 15 | 563 A. D |
| 13 | Hari Rai | 563 A. D | 38 | 601 A. D |
| 14 | Gajraj Rai | 601 A. D | 26 | 627 A. D |
| 15 | Sundar Rai | 627 A. D | 8 | 635 A. D |
| 16 | Mukund Rai | 635 A. D | 18 | 653 A. D |
| 17 | Udai Rai | 653 A. D | 57 | 710 A. D |
| 18 | Kandan Rai | 710 A. D | 46 | 756 A. D |
| 19 | Jagan Rai | 756 A. D | 16 | 772 A. D |
| 20 | Magan Rai | 772 A. D | 39 | 811 A. D |
| 21 | Mohan Rai | 811 A. D | 58 | 869 A. D |
| 22 | Gajghant Rai | 869 A. D | 36 | 905 A. D |
| 23 | Chandra Rai | 905 A. D | 27 | 932 A. D |
| 24 | Andu Rai | 932 A. D | 37 | 969 A. D |
| 25 | Shreepati Rai | 969 A. D | 28 | 997 A. D |
| 26 | Jogenrda Rai | 997 A. D | 7 | 1004 A. D |
| 27 | Nripendra Rai | 1004 A. D | 43 | 1047 A. D |
| 28 | Ganarav Rai | 1047 A. D | 51 | 1098 A. D |

| | | | | |
|----|-------------------|-----------|----|-----------|
| 29 | Bhim Karn | 1098 A. D | 34 | 1132 A. D |
| 30 | Josh Karn | 1132 A. D | 48 | 1180 A. D |
| 31 | Jal Karn | 1180 A. D | 38 | 1218 A. D |
| 32 | Gao Karn | 1218 A. D | 18 | 1236 A. D |
| 33 | Hari Karn | 1236 A. D | 31 | 1267 A. D |
| 34 | Seva Karn | 1267 A. D | 38 | 1305 A. D |
| 35 | Venu Karn | 1305 A. D | 27 | 1332 A. D |
| 36 | Renu Karn | 1332 A. D | 28 | 1360 A. D |
| 37 | Tehle Karn | 1360 A. D | 7 | 1367 A. D |
| 38 | Shivdas Karn | 1367 A. D | 16 | 1383 A. D |
| 39 | Uday Karn | 1383 A. D | 50 | 1433 A. D |
| 40 | Virupi Karn | 1433 A. D | 38 | 1451 A. D |
| 41 | Pratap Karn | 1451 A. D | 18 | 1469 A. D |
| 42 | Chata Karn | 1469 A. D | 27 | 1496 A. D |
| 43 | Viraa Karn | 1496 A. D | 5 | 1501 A. D |
| 44 | Panketu Rai | 1501 A. D | 11 | 1512 A. D |
| 45 | Bairi Saal | 1512 A. D | 18 | 1530 A. D |
| 46 | Durjan Saal | 1530 A. D | 38 | 1568 A. D |
| 47 | Madhukar Shahi | 1568 A. D | 15 | 1583 A. D |
| 48 | Dev Shahi | 1583 A. D | 37 | 1620 A. D |
| 49 | Ram Shahi | 1620 A. D | 25 | 1645 A. D |
| 50 | Raghunath Sahi | 1645 A. D | 60 | 1705 A. D |
| 51 | Yadunath Shahi | 1705 A. D | 18 | 1723 A. D |
| 52 | Shivnath Shahi | 1723 A. D | 9 | 1732 A. D |
| 53 | Sham Sundar Shahi | 1732 A. D | 5 | 1737 A. D |
| 54 | Uday Nath Shahi | 1737 A. D | 7 | 1744 A. D |
| 55 | Billo Ram Shahi | 1744 A. D | 3 | 1747 A. D |
| 56 | Manmath Shahi | 1747 A. D | 14 | 1761 A. D |
| 57 | Dripnath Shahi | 1761 A. D | 26 | 1787 A. D |

After them, Devnath Shahi, Gobind Shahi, Jagannath Shahi and Pratap Daudau Nath Shahi ruled. This ruling tradition was abolished in order to abolish Zamindari during the time of the last king Chintamani Shahdev (Keshari, 2014).

There are significant similarities between the Munda and Oraon traditions and the family legend of the Maharaja of Chota Nagpur. The first Raja is claimed to have been born in the village of Sutiambe near Pitauria while his parents were travelling to Puri. He was the son of the powerful snake-God Pundarika Nag and Parvati, the daughter of a Banaras Brahman. After giving birth to a child named Phani Mukut Rai, Parvati committed suicide as a Sati on a funeral pyre in excruciating agony over the outcome of her womanly curiosity. Pundarika Nag, forced to reveal his identity to his wife, immediately vanished in his proper form in a pool of water. According to legend, the snake-God

reappeared and foretold that the kid would grow up to become the Raja of the nation, which would eventually be called Nagkhand or Nagpur. Madra, the Manki of Sutiambe, raised the infant alongside his own son. When the two boys were around twelve years old, Madra nominated the adopted son as his successor since he thought the youngster was so much smarter than his own son. The other Mankis and Parla-Rajas then elected Phani Mukut Rai as their Chief in unanimity (Kumar, 1970).

CONCLUSION

The study shows absence of warfare other than foreign incursions indicates that the arrival of the Nagvanshis in Chhotanagpur and their ongoing domination did not stem from military triumph but the Intercultural compatibility. The paper aimed to demonstrate the history of Nagvanshi in Jharkhand and their connection with the other tribes residing here. The published historical data and the local prevailing oral narratives describe the similar specifics.

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